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AMEMBASSY BEIJING
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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 TUNIS 12749

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: (U) SPR 0002, TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH
COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

11. (C) SUMMARY: ALMOST ALL COMMUNIST COUNTRIES MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN TUNISIA. THE SOVIET AND CHINESE REPRESENTATIONS ARE, CHARACTERISTICALLY, THE LARGEST. OVERALL, TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES ARE GOOD BUT NOT OVERLY WARM. 1988, TUNISIAN PRESIDENT ZINE EL ABIDINE BEN ALI'S FIRST FULL YEAR IN OFFICE, MARKED THE CONTINUANCE OF A PERCEPTIBLE WARMING TREND IN TUNISIAN-COMMUNIST BLOC RELATIONS. THE ROOT CAUSE OF THIS TREND PROBABLY LIES IN BEN ALI'S DESIRE TO PRESENT HIMSELF TO HIS MAGHREB NEIGHBORS (PARTICULARLY LIBYA) AS A MODERATE, NON-ALIGNED ARAB CHIEF OF STATE. WHILE TUNISIA RETAINS HER TRADITIONAL STRONG TIES TO THE U.S., FRANCE, ITALY AND OTHER WESTERN POWERS, THE BEN ALI ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO PLAY DOWN THE TUNISIAN-WESTERN RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THIS NOTED, IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN MORE COSMETIC THAN SUBSTANTIVE IN NATURE. THIS IS PROBABLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT COMMUNIST BLOC COUNTRIES ARE NOT YET PREPARED TO OFFER BEN ALI THE KIND OF FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE THAT HE DESIRES. END SUMMARY.

PART I. OFFICIAL COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION:

12. (C) DURING THE CALENDAR YEAR, EMBASSY NOTED NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN COMMUNIST EMBASSY STAFFING OR ACCREDITATION LEVELS APART FROM THE NOVEMBER ACCREDITATION OF AN EAST GERMAN MILITARY ATTACHE (RESIDENT IN ALGIERS, SEE MILITARY RELATIONS BELOW). THERE WERE NO COMMUNIST EMBASSY EXPULSIONS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD. FOLLOWING ARE 1988 ESTIMATES FOR SOVIET EMBASSY AND OTHER PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO TUNISIA (SPOUSES, CHILDREN NOT INCLUDED):

--ACCREDITED DIPLOMATS:	25
--EMBASSY, CONSULAR, AND CULTURAL CENTER STAFF:	27
--TRADE STAFF:	16
--GKES (SOON TO BE INCORPORATED WITH TRADE MISSION):	9
--AEROFLOT:	3
--JOURNALISTS:	3
--SOVIET EMBASSY GRADE SCHOOL EMPLOYEES:	4
--TOTAL:	87

(NOTE: THE REDUCTION FROM LAST YEAR'S ESTIMATED TOTAL OF 120 IS PROBABLY DUE TO A REDUCTION IN STAFF VICE OFFICIAL PERSONNEL. IN ADDITION TO THE OFFICIALS LISTED ABOVE, ACCORDING TO A SOVIET DIPLOMAT, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 300 SOVIET COOPERANTS IN TUNISIA.)

13. (C) FOLLOWING ARE 1988 ESTIMATES FOR NON-SOVIET COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION IN TUNISIA (TOTAL PRESENCE FIGURES UNAVAILABLE UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED):

--BULGARIA: 7 DIPLOMATS (D), 9 STAFF/TRADE/OTHER (S)
--CZECHOSLOVAKIA: 7 D, 9 S
--EAST GERMANY: 6 D (WITH MILATT IN ALGIERS), 5 S
--HUNGARY: 4 D, 4 S
--POLAND: 6 D, 3 S
--ROMANIA: 3 D, 1 S
--CUBA: 3 D
--CHINA: 21 D (TOTAL S UNKNOWN BUT ESTIMATED AT 30)
--ALBANIA: NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADOR (NRA)
--NORTH KOREA: 3 D
--VIETNAM: NRA
--YUGOSLAVIA: 3 D, 4 S

PART II. LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP:

14. (C) THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF TUNISIA (PCT) WAS LEGALIZED IN JULY 1981 AND HAS APPROXIMATELY 400-500 ACTIVE MEMBERS AND APPROXIMATELY 2000-3000 SYMPATHIZERS. IN 1988, PCT ACTIVITY ON TUNISIAN CAMPUSES WAS MINIMAL DUE TO GROWING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST, ARAB NATIONALIST, AND RIVAL LEFTIST ACTIVITIES. THE LEFTIST STUDENTS, WHO STILL VIEW THE PCT AS TOO MODERATE, BELONG TO A SMALL GROUP OF POORLY ORGANIZED STUDENT COMMUNIST/LEFTIST MOVEMENTS THAT ARE LOOSELY UNITED UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE RECOGNIZED GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN STUDENTS (UGET) LED BY SELF-AVOWED MARXIST SAMIR LABIDI. DURING THIS REPORTING PERIOD, THE "HONEYMOON" BETWEEN THE BEN ALI ADMINISTRATION AND PCT LEADER MOHAMMED HARMEL CONTINUED. HARMEL WAS ONE OF SEVERAL LEGAL OPPOSITION LEADERS WHO SIGNED THE 7 NOVEMBER 1988 "NATIONAL PACT" (A SYMBOLIC DOCUMENT PLEDGING COOPERATION AND FAIR PLAY BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, THE RULING PARTY, THE UNIONS, AND VARIOUS OPPOSITION PARTIES). HARMEL SPEAKS RUSSIAN AND MAINTAINS GOOD CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET AND OTHER EAST BLOC EMBASSIES AND THE PCT IS RECOGNIZED BY THE CPSU AS A LEGITIMATE COMMUNIST PARTY. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE PCT WILL BECOME AN APPRECIABLE POLITICAL FORCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. BEN ALI HAS MANAGED TO TAME THE PCT TO POINT OF ALMOST TOTAL CONCILIATION, AND THE PCT'S POSSIBLE STUDENT BASE OF SUPPORT APPEARS TO HOLD DISDAIN FOR THIS MODERATE COMMUNIST PARTY. IN ADDITION, THE PCT REMAINS AT ODDS WITH THE BROAD POPULAR ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST SECTOR OF TUNISIAN SOCIETY. IN DECEMBER, THE PCT ATTEMPTED TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POPULARITY OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE BY STAGING THREE DAYS OF FESTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE INTIFADAH UPRISINGS.

15. (S) DURING THIS REPORTING PERIOD, BEN ALI'S DECISION TO LEGALIZE THE TRADITIONAL UGET STUDENT UNION HAS TAKEN THE WIND FROM THE SAILS OF THE MORE RADICAL LEFTIST STUDENT GROUPS. RADICAL LEFTIST INFLUENCE CONTINUED TO FLOURISH IN THE FORM OF ORGANIZED OPPOSITION TO THE GOT-CONTROLLED GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WORKERS (UGTT), HOWEVER, BEN ALI'S ONGOING REFORM PROGRAM APPEARS TO BE ATTRACTING THE GREATER MAJORITY OF TUNISIAN WORKERS AWAY FROM THE RADICALS. THERE IS IN FACT AN UNRECOGNIZED COMMUNIST WORKER'S PARTY OF TUNISIA (POCT) WHOSE MEMBERSHIP AND INFLUENCE IN THE TUNISIAN UNIONS AND ON CAMPUS REMAINS UNKNOWN. ALTHOUGH COMMUNIST INFLUENCE COULD GROW WITHIN THE INCREASINGLY LIBERAL TUNISIAN POLITICAL CLIMATE, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT BEN ALI WOULD ALLOW THE COMMUNIST/LEFTIST MOVEMENTS TO GO VERY FAR BEYOND ACTING AS DE FACTO COUNTERWEIGHTS TO THE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS. IN SHORT, TUNISIAN COMMUNISM, WITH THE ESSENTIALLY WEAK PCT AS ITS CENTERPIECE, DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE A VERY PROMISING FUTURE.

PART III. CULTURAL RELATIONS, EDUCATION EXCHANGE:

16. (LOU) THE SOVIET UNION PROMOTES SOVIET CULTURE IN TUNISIA. ITS CULTURAL CENTER OFFERS A TUITION FREE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM AND ALSO SPONSORS FILMS, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITS, AND MUSICAL PERFORMANCES.

THERE IS A TUNISIAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION WHICH SPONSORS SUCH ACTIVITIES AS LECTURES BY VISITING SOVIET ACADEMICS. THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ALSO SPONSOR CULTURAL EVENTS (MID JANUARY 1988 GAVE US A CZECHOSLOVAK CULTURAL WEEK ALONG WITH THE CONCURRENT VISIT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CULTURAL MINISTER TO TUNIS). CUBAN SPONSORSHIP OF SUCH EVENTS IS USUALLY LIMITED TO ACTIVITIES CO-SPONSORED BY OTHER LATIN COUNTRIES REPRESENTED IN TUNISIA. CHINESE CULTURAL INFLUENCE IS ALSO PRESENT BUT LIMITED AS CHINA TENDS TO CENTER ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA ON TRADE, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES. TASS AND THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY ARE BOTH REPRESENTED IN TUNIS. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL COMMUNIST JOURNALS, INCLUDING THE SOVIET FRENCH LANGUAGE VERSION OF "MOSCOW NEWS" ARE AVAILABLE AT DOWNTOWN TUNIS NEWSSTANDS. SOME LOCAL VIDEO CLUBS ALSO CARRY SOVIET FILMS FOR VIDEOCASSETTE RENTAL.

17. (C) THE NUMBER OF TUNISIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES REMAINED ESSENTIALLY THE SAME IN 1988. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT COMMUNIST EDUCATED PERSONNEL ARE ACCEDING TO POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY IN THE GOVERNMENT OR THE RULING PARTY. REGARDING THE PRC, ACCORDING TO THE ESTIMATE OF ONE CHINESE DIPLOMAT, THE MAJORITY OF TUNISIANS IN CHINA ARE LANGUAGE STUDENTS. OVERALL, THE MAJORITY OF TUNISIAN STUDENTS WHO STUDY ABROAD DO SO IN WESTERN COUNTRIES. THIS IS DUE BOTH TO THE GENERAL PERCEPTION THAT THE QUALITY OF A WESTERN EDUCATION CANNOT BE MATCHED ELSEWHERE, AND A CERTAIN TUNISIAN CULTURAL AFFINITY TOWARDS THE WEST. NO NEW MAJOR SCIENTIFIC OR CULTURAL AGREEMENTS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WERE SIGNED IN 1988. ACCORDING TO A SOVIET OFFICIAL WITH ALLEGED CONSULAR DUTIES, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT GRANTS APPROXIMATELY 60 FOUR YEAR UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS A YEAR AND CLAIMS THAT, AT ANY GIVEN TIME, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 400 TUNISIAN STUDENTS IN THE USSR. A BULGARIAN OFFICIAL SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT GRANTED SEVEN SCHOLARSHIPS A YEAR AND THAT THE TOTAL OF TUNISIAN STUDENTS IN HIS COUNTRY RARELY EXCEEDED FIFTY (INCLUDING THOSE WHO FINANCE THEIR OWN STUDIES). A CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS STUDYING IN HIS COUNTRY HAS REMAINED CONSTANT SINCE THE CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATIONS IN TUNISIA.

PART IV. DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR RELATIONS: NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OTHER THAN THE ACCREDITATION OF SOME MILITARY ATTACHES (SEE MILITARY RELATIONS).

PART VI. APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL/ECONOMIC/MILITARY RELATIONS:

18. POLITICAL:

1A. (S) PRIOR TO BEN ALI'S LATE 1987 ASSUMPTION OF POWER, TUNISIA HAD MAINTAINED CORRECT BUT COOL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH MOST COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FOR SEVERAL YEARS. FORMER PRESIDENT HABIB BOURGUIBA WAS A STAUNCH ANTI-COMMUNIST AND NOT AVERSE TO MAKING HIS PRO-WESTERN VIEWS KNOWN. DURING THIS PERIOD, IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE MAJORITY OF COMMUNIST EMBASSIES IN TUNISIA WERE THERE SIMPLY TO CARRY ON RELATIONS WITH THE PLO AND MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE (BOTH OF WHICH ARE HEADQUARTERED IN TUNIS) RATHER THAN TO FOCUS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA. SINCE THE 1987 CHANGE AND ON INTO 1988, THERE HAS BEEN A PERCEPTIBLE WARMING TREND IN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER BLOC COUNTRIES THAT HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF WITH INCREASED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND INCREASED COVERAGE OF SOVIET INTERNAL EVENTS IN THE TUNISIAN MEDIA. TUNISIA'S TRADITIONAL REASON FOR MAINTAINING CORRECT RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS STEMMED FROM THE GOT BELIEF THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE OVER LIBYA (WITH WHOM THE GOT REESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

IN DECEMBER OF 1987). NOW THAT THE TUNISIAN-LIBYAN RAPPROCHEMENT HAS CONTINUED FOR ALMOST A FULL YEAR, TUNISIA MAY NOT NEED THIS PERCEIVED "RESTRAINING INFLUENCE" OVER QADHAFI. GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAVE NEITHER THE RESOURCES NOR THE DESIRE TO CONTRIBUTE GREAT AMOUNTS OF FOREIGN AID TO TUNISIA, THE WARMING TREND MAY RETAIN ITS PRESENT COSMETIC NATURE AND NOT GO MUCH FURTHER. THE GOT WILL CONTINUE TO MARKET PHOSPHATES, FERTILIZERS, AND OLIVE OIL TO THE SOVIET BLOC. THIS SAID, PAST EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THESE COUNTRIES TEND TO DRIVE HARD BARGAINS WITH TUNISIA. BEN ALI VERY OBVIOUSLY CONTINUES TO PLACE A GREATER EMPHASIS ON REGIONAL MAGHREB ISSUES THAN ON EAST-WEST AFFAIRS.

1B. (S) AFTER THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA HAS THE LARGEST COMMUNIST REPRESENTATION IN TUNISIA. OVERALL, SINO-TUNISIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON COMMERCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND LESS ON POLITICS PER SE. ONE CHINESE OFFICIAL VIEWED THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT AS CORDIAL BUT COOL. DESPITE THE LARGE IN COUNTRY PRC REPRESENTATION, THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF TUNISIAN DIPLOMATS IN CHINA. AS WITH MANY EMBASSIES IN TUNIS, THE PRINCIPLE REASON FOR THE CHINESE EMBASSY PRESENCE MAY WELL BE THE PRESENCE OF THE PLO. A CHINESE ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED TUNIS IN LATE 1988, HOWEVER ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE MET WITH TUNISIAN OFFICIALS TO CONVEY CHINESE VIEWS ON MAJOR WORLD EVENTS AND NOT TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE BILATERAL ISSUES.

1C. (C) ON THE EASTERN EUROPEAN SIDE, POLITICAL RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE GOOD BUT NON-SUBSTANTIVE. IN MID SUMMER, A MEMBER OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK COMMUNIST PARTY PRESIDUIM VISITED THE TUNISIAN PARLIAMENT, HOWEVER, APART FROM SOME VAGUE PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF FRATERNITY AND FRIENDSHIP, THE VISIT SEEEMS TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED VERY LITTLE. THE EARLY 1988 VISIT OF THE ROMANIAN PRIME MINISTER APPEARS TO HAVE PRODUCED SIMILAR RESULTS AND THE SAME CAN BE SAID FOR THE MARCH VISIT OF A BULGARIAN STATE COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT.

19. ECONOMIC:

1A. (LOU) TUNISIA'S ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL LINKS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ARE SLIGHT IN COMPARISON TO THOSE WITH TUNISIA'S TRADITIONAL TRADING PARTNERS AND, DURING 1988, REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT.

-USSR: IN NOVEMBER, THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO REINFORCE BILATERAL COMMERCIAL TIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION IN 1989. TO THIS END, THE TUNISIAN-SOVIET JOINT COMMISSION WILL MEET IN TUNIS IN DECEMBER (WITH THE SOVIET DELEGATION LED BY THEIR MINISTER OF PLANS). ALSO DURING THIS PERIOD, THE SOVIETS PROVIDED MATERIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF TWO LARGE BIPLANE CROP DUSTERS TO ASSIST TUNISIA AGAINST THE NORTH AFRICAN LOCUST INVASION. THE SOVIET UNION EXPORTS LUMBER, AMMONIA, POTASSIUM, AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT, HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, BOOKS AND FILMS TO TUNISIA. IN 1988, THE USSR PURCHASED APPROXIMATELY 180,000 METRIC TONS OF TUNISIAN TRIPLE SUPERPHOSPHATE (FOR APPROXIMATELY U.S. DOLLARS 27 MILLION) AND OLIVE OIL.

1B. (C) EASTERN EUROPE: BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH SEVERAL EAST BLOC OFFICIALS, THE CHANGE IN TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT HAS HAD LITTLE IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS.

-CZECHOSLOVAKIA: TRADE FIGURES DROPPED CONSIDERABLY FROM U.S. DOLLARS 10 MILLION WORTH OF CZECHOSLOVAK EXPORTS TO TUNISIA IN 1986 TO 4.9 MILLION IN 1987. TUNISIAN EXPORTS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA (MOSTLY PHOSPHATE BASED PRODUCTS) DROPPED FROM U.S. DOLLARS 11 MILLION TO 6.6 MILLION DURING THE SAME PERIOD. ACCORDING TO

A CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICIAL, BOTH FIGURES ARE EXPECTED TO INCREASE BY APPROXIMATELY THIRTY PERCENT IN 1988.

-POLAND: A POLISH OFFICIAL SAID THAT COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA HAD IN FACT CHANGED FOR THE BETTER SINCE THE CHANGE OF POWER. HE FIRST NOTED THAT THE TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY NO LONGER HAD TO GRANT SPECIAL WAIVERS TO TUNISIAN COMPANIES WHO DESIRED TO DO BUSINESS WITH POLAND AND THAT THE CENTRAL BANK BUREAUCRACY WAS "MORE COOPERATIVE". THIS NOTED, HE SAID THE TRADE FIGURES REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT, I.E. POLISH EXPORTS TO TUNISIA REMAINED AT THE APPROXIMATE U.S. DOLLARS 22 MILLION LEVEL AND TUNISIAN PRODUCTS IMPORTED TO POLAND ACTUALLY FELL TO APPROXIMATELY U.S. DOLLARS 1.5 MILLION IN 1988. THE OFFICIAL ATTRIBUTED THIS DROP TO ONGOING INTERNAL REFORMS IN POLAND. HE WOULD NOT SPECULATE ON WHAT EFFECT THE PLANNED JANUARY 1988 ABOLISHMENT OF POLAND'S CENTRAL EXPORT/IMPORT PARASTATAL COMPANY WOULD HAVE ON POLISH-TUNISIAN COMMERCIAL RELATIONS. HE ADDED THAT THE TUNISIAN SIDE "PUSHED" BARTER TRADE OVER HARD CURRENCY PURCHASES.

-BULGARIA: A BULGARIAN OFFICIAL TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT BILATERAL COMMERCIAL RELATIONS REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT DURING 1988. HE ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO BULGARIAN ECONOMIC AID FOR TUNISIA (CITING LIMITED RESOURCES AS THE REASON) AND SAID HE BELIEVED THIS WAS THE CASE FOR OTHER EAST BLOC COUNTRIES.

-ROMANIA: A ROMANIAN OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT THERE IS NO ROMANIAN ECONOMIC AID PER SE TO TUNISIA AND THAT ROMANIAN-TUNISIAN COMMERCIAL TIES HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT. HE NOTED THAT THE "LIBERALIZATION" OF TUNISIA'S IMPORT RESTRICTIONS COULD INCREASE ROMANIAN TRADE WITH TUNISIA DURING THE COMING YEAR.

1C. (LOU) CHINA: SINO-TUNISIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION HAS CONTINUED MUCH AT THE SAME PACE DURING THIS PERIOD AS DURING THE PAST. BASED ON A 1985 AGREEMENT, CONSTRUCTION BEGAN IN MID 1988 IN CHINA ON A SINO-TUNISIAN-KUWAITI FERTILIZER PROCESSING PLANT. TUNISIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE VENTURE IS 30 PERCENT AND TUNISIA WILL SUPPLY CHINA WITH 250,000 METRIC TONS OF PHOSPHORIC ACID PER YEAR.

110. MILITARY:

(S) TUNISIAN MILITARY TIES WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ARE MINIMAL. AS OF THIS REPORT, ONLY ONE COMMUNIST MILITARY ATTACHE HAD BEEN ACCREDITED TO TUNISIA (GDR, RESIDENT IN ALGIERS). AS OF LATE NOVEMBER, THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PLANNING TO PRESENT THE ACCREDITATION PAPERS OF THEIR OWN MILITARY ATTACHE. IN EARLY DECEMBER, A CHINESE OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE PRC WOULD PROBABLY ACCREDIT A MILITARY ATTACHE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THIS MARKS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN TUNISIAN-COMMUNIST BLOC RELATIONS AS FORMER PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD SPECIFICALLY BARRED THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FROM OPENING MILITARY ATTACHE OFFICES. AS OF THIS WRITING, THERE WERE NO COMMUNIST MILITARY TECHNICIANS OR ADVISORS IN TUNISIA. ASIDE FROM THE SOVIET SHIP REPAIR CONTRACT, THERE IS NO KNOWN SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST MILITARY ACTIVITY IN TUNISIA. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONFIRMED REPORTS OF TUNISIANS TRAVELING TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FOR MILITARY TRAINING. COMMUNIST BLOC MILITARY AID HAS THUS FAR BEEN NON-EXISTANT. THIS NOTED, A CHINESE OFFICIAL SAID THAT, DURING THE RECENT MAGHREB TOUR OF A CHINESE MILITARY DELEGATION, TUNISIA REQUESTED CHINESE AID IN THE FORM OF UNSPECIFIED NAVAL VESSELS. HE ADDED THAT, AS OF DECEMBER, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET COME TO A DECISION ON THE MATTER.

